

Exhibit 11

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This Woman Exec Beat Google in Court—and Hopes Others Follow

A court awarded Google executive Ulku Rowe \$1.15 million, making her the first woman to win a sexist discrimination case against the company in court. She hopes to inspire others to do the same.



Ulku Rowe COURTESY OF OUTTEN & GOLDEN



Earlier this month, Google executive Ulku Rowe became the first person to face Google in court over sexist discrimination since a 2018 mass walkout led the company to stop forcing employees to settle such matters privately. A Manhattan jury rendered its verdict last week, finding that Google had discriminated against Rowe on the basis of her gender and retaliated after she objected to the mistreatment.

Rowe says the verdict represents the culmination of years of Googlers pushing back against their employer's behavior, and she hopes it will be a first step toward greater equity at the company.

"I was able to bring this lawsuit because of the steps that many, many people took before me," she says, citing the 20,000 people who participated in the 2018 walkout, fueled in part by dissatisfaction with the company's handling of sexual harassment claims and demanding an end to forced arbitration, among other issues. Rowe hopes her case will be seen as "a catalyst for others" to stand up against discrimination.

Rowe, a financial technology exec with more than two decades of experience, alleged that when Google hired her in 2017 as a technical director in its Cloud unit, it assigned her a lower level and salary than equally or less qualified male colleagues, costing her hundreds of thousands of dollars and restricting her career.

After Rowe raised the issue internally, she was labeled "abrasive," excluded from meetings, passed over for a promotion for which she was qualified, and ultimately demoted, according to her legal filings. Rowe's lawyer Cara Greene, a partner at the firm Outten and Golden, calls retaliation just as harmful as discrimination because it "kills people's willingness to come forward about discrimination."

The jury found that Google treated Rowe unfairly because of her gender and retaliated against her after she complained. But it did not find in favor of Rowe's

claim that Google violated New York labor law by paying her less than two higher-level male colleagues who performed similar work. The court ordered Google to pay Rowe \$150,000 for emotional distress and \$1 million in punitive damages. Greene says that Rowe's legal team plans to bring a motion for injunctive relief, meaning the court could order Google to take a specific action, such as adjusting Rowe's level. In a statement, Google spokesperson Courtenay Mencini focused on the company's win in beating one of Rowe's claims. "We are pleased that the jury unanimously found that Ms. Rowe has been paid and leveled fairly from the time she was hired to date, and that she was not subsequently denied any promotions," she wrote, citing the jury's decision not to award back pay as evidence that it agreed with Google's leveling decision. "Fairness is absolutely critical to us and we strongly believe in the equity of our leveling and compensation processes."

Greene disagrees with the idea that the verdict implied Google had fairly leveled Rowe. The jury found that Google treated Rowe less well because of her gender, she points out, and under-leveling was one of the ways Rowe and her attorneys alleged unfair treatment.

Mencini says Google disagrees with the jury's finding that it discriminated and retaliated against Rowe. "We prohibit retaliation in the workplace and publicly share our very clear policy," Mencini wrote. She did not comment on whether Google plans to appeal.

Claire Stapleton, one of the organizers of the 2018 walkout, is celebrating Rowe's victory while acknowledging the burden of speaking out. Stapleton left Google after she says the company demoted her in retaliation for her work on the walkout and other acts of employee resistance, claims that Google has denied. "Anyone who's tried to make things fairer knows that typically when you make a complaint, you become a problem," Stapleton says. "Let Ulku's righteous victory be a clear message to workers at every level: The fight is worth it."

Rowe says her case pressed on her like a weight over the four years it dragged on. "You go to work every day and put in 100 percent as a professional woman and an executive, but there is this big elephant in the room overshadowing everything that you do, affecting every relationship." She says she drew strength from other women inside and outside Google, including members of the New York City chapter of the

company's women's affinity group, which she coleads. "It was both uplifting and sad to hear from so many women who shared their personal stories [of discrimination]," she says.

Rowe says she decided to bring her case after exhausting Google's internal channels. The company conducted two internal investigations, which Mencini called "thorough," but found no evidence of discrimination or retaliation. At trial, however, Rowe's lawyers were able to present evidence that was excluded from Google's investigations, for example, by hearing testimony from three of Rowe's male colleagues that Greene says wasn't included in the company's second internal investigation.

The trial took place over six days, during which Rowe, Google Cloud CTO Will Grannis, and former Cloud president Tariq Shaukat testified. Grannis acknowledged the fuzziness of the leveling rubric during his testimony, according to courtroom reporting by [Law360](#). He testified that a Level 9 employee, the level above Rowe, was expected to be a "world-class expert in a topic" and a "pace-setter," but he conceded that "there was no leveling guide" and "we were still figuring it out."

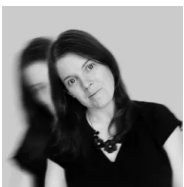
While the verdict was the first in a gender discrimination case against Google, the search giant has paid out several settlements related to pay equity in recent years. In 2021, the company resolved to pay a \$3.8 million settlement after the US Department of Labor [found](#) "systemic compensation disparities" across the workforce. Last year, Google agreed to pay \$118 million to [settle](#) a class action suit claiming that it underpaid women in California and \$22 million to [settle](#) a suit claiming it under-leveled Black and female employees in New York.

Rowe continues to work in Google's cloud division—she says leaving the company would have been taking the easy way out. But, she allows, once she became publicly associated with the lawsuit, leaving may not have been easy either. In the end, it came down to fairness. "They are the ones that did all this," she says. "Why should I be the one to leave?"

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